

Wesley has served as chairman of the Georgia Bankers Association and is currently serving on the board of directors of the American Bankers Association. His service on community boards, chambers of commerce, college foundations, and other charitable efforts are simply too numerous to mention.

But as I said, banking institutions have a unique history in and of themselves. In order to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Northwest Georgia Bank, a book was written, and it is a delightful read. It is one of those kinds of books that at first glance you would say is only self-serving, but it is not, as I read it. It reminded me of the history of my part of the country.

This bank, first of all, had its initial beginnings back in 1856. It was part of an empire that was built in those days as the banking industry was beginning to take root in our country.

But in 1856, we all know what came shortly thereafter, and that was the devastation of the Civil War. In Ringgold, which is there in the gap of Lookout Mountain, it was one of the major trade routes of olden days and certainly was one of the trade routes with a railroad coming out of Chattanooga.

Many of you recall the story of the race of the General, the locomotive that was stolen during the Civil War, and it was recovered just north of the Ringgold area. But the bank itself was thriving, as was the community of Ringgold, until the Civil War. Being directly in the path of General Sherman's march after he left Chattanooga, the town of Ringgold and the bank were destroyed.

As a result of that, for 40 years this community was without a bank. It had been literally burned to the ground, as had most of the town. But then in 1904 a gentleman, who had gained quite a reputation as a dynamic individual in the banking industry and was putting together a chain of banks, by the name of W.S. Witham came to Ringgold and started the bank again in that community.

It survived in spite of closings in 1927 and 1933, survived the Great Depression, survived Roosevelt's bank holiday period, and continued to prosper, even with its ups and downs and even in spite of a daring daylight bank robbery where the president was held at gunpoint in this small community.

Well, that is a very quick history of an institution in my part of the world. I congratulate the Northwest Georgia Bank, which is certainly unique. I most certainly congratulate my friend Wesley Smith for his 35 years of service as the president of that institution.

I remind all of us again that we sometimes take for granted that not only the things that happen in governmental units affect the history of our country, but also institutions like banks play a vital role in weaving that tapestry that holds us all together.

□ 1845

HOUSE FOR SALE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WESTMORELAND). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, the special interests may have gained access to the Capitol, but the American people are paying for it.

My colleague from Oregon talked about the prescription drug bill. It is a classic example when you see what happens to seniors across all of our districts who are not more than confused but have to fill out more than 30 pages of forms to get a single drug, where the drug companies or HMOs or insurance companies that are providing the plan can switch drugs like that at any moment, but they cannot switch out.

The basic tenet of business is to take care of the customer first. If this was designed with the customer in mind, it really does come as a surprise.

But I will tell you what is happening in the industry of healthcare specifically as we talk about the pharmaceutical industry and the prescription drug bill is happening in the energy area. The energy industry last year spent \$87 million to lobby the United States Congress. Now what did they get for that \$87 million? They got \$14.5 billion in taxpayer support to drill for oil. We are paying ExxonMobil, Texaco \$14.5 billion to drill for oil when energy is at a little over 60 bucks a barrel. For their \$87 million of investment, they got taxpayers to fork over \$14.5 billion. And we pay at the pump nearly 3 bucks a gallon, the highest price in a long time, and yet we also pay on April 15 with tax breaks for big oil, Texaco, ExxonMobil, Chevron, and all the other big oil companies, BP Amoco.

They also got a waiver in the lost revenue from royalties, that they are supposed to pay about \$7 billion in royalties for drilling in the Gulf of Mexico. We also support them with another \$2 billion for deepwater drilling in the Gulf of Mexico. So \$87 million has gotten big oil companies \$14.5 billion in taxpayer support, passed on \$7 billion in royalties that they own, and another \$2 billion on top of that for deepwater drilling, a little north of \$20 billion. You cannot get a return on your investment like that even on Wall Street, but that is just one area where the American people are paying for the type of access that the special interests have.

There is a for sale sign here on the People's House, and for the last 5 years that for sale sign has allowed any special interest access and the American people are paying for it. When the Speaker's gavel comes down, it is intended to open the People's House, not the auction house; and for the last 5 years it has been nothing but an auction house here.

My colleague talked about the prescription drug companies. They are

going to get, over the next 8 years, an additional \$139 billion in profits that they would not get, a 25 percent, 28 percent increase in their profit margin. They spent about \$173 million lobbying the United States Congress. They got \$139 billion in additional profits. The HMOs and the private insurers got an additional \$130 million they would not have seen any other way if it was not for the prescription drug bill.

And what did our seniors get? Plans in which none of them can figure it out, total confusion, drugs that are being dropped, some drugs that are skyrocketing. When they used to pay 4 and 5 bucks, they are now \$150, and other drugs have dropped. Absolute confusion and plans that are locked in for 1 year.

All the while, what else do they get? We cannot negotiate prices just like Sam's Club does when they do bulk purchasing. We cannot allow our seniors access to Canadian and British drugs and drugs from Ireland and France and Germany so they can get competition from free trade and choice, and we cannot allow generics on the market quicker so that they can compete with name brand drugs. In every step of the way, that prescription drug bill avoided and outlawed the very principles of a free market, all in favor of creating a captive market for the prescription drug companies; and, once again, the taxpayers and the seniors are supporting and literally backstopping the prescription drug companies and HMOs and insurance companies. We taxpayers are paying for it.

As my colleague said, the bill was sold here on the floor for \$394 billion. Before the ink was dry, it was reported to cost \$790 billion, twice the actual cost. There are some in government that knew that was what it was going to cost. So all of the taxpayers now are going to have to pay \$800 billion over 10 years; and the pharmaceutical companies, HMO companies, and private insurance companies are going to walk off with huge profits.

And all the while what has happened to the American people? Energy is up, in the last 2 years, 78 percent. Gasoline. Health care costs are up 58 percent. On average for a family of four, \$3,600 over the last 5 years. College costs are up 38 percent; yet we may end up cutting college aid.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to note that we have a for sale sign on the front of the lawn here at the people's Capitol, and this November this election should be to return that gavel to its rightful owner, the American people.

VOCA: ROUND II

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, that great Iron Lady from across the ocean, Margaret Thatcher, made the comment

that you may have to fight a battle more than once to win it.

Let me give you a little historical background. I have spent all my life in the criminal justice system, first as a prosecutor in Texas and 22 years as a criminal court judge, heard about 20, 25,000 criminal cases, everything from stealing to killing. I saw a lot of people come to the courthouse.

But another group of people also worked their way to the courthouse, and they did not want to be there either, and that was the victims of crime. They were young, they were old, they were men, they were women, they were children. They were the silent group of people who were prey because of criminals.

Victims do not really have a lobby because most of them have to take care of themselves after they become victims of crime, until recently. In 1984, a novel program was started under the Reagan administration called VOCA, Victims of Crime Act; and the idea was pretty simple: Criminals in the Federal courts that are convicted pay into a court cost fund. That money then is used for victims and helps pay for their injuries, for their medical expenses, sometimes the funeral expenses. A great idea: Make criminals pay for the system they have created. Make them pay the rent on the courthouse. And that has been going along fairly well, so well that approximately \$1.2 billion is now in that fund. And it is not taxpayer money. It is not the Federal Government's money. It is money that belongs to victims, money that has been obtained from criminals. And it is a crucial resource for different organizations throughout the United States.

Most victims groups, programs, agencies operate under a shoestring. Many of them are just trying to keep lights on, and they receive this VOCA funding. We are talking about domestic violence shelters. We are talking about rape crisis centers. Victim compensation funds, funeral services, and medical expenses all receive benefit from VOCA funding. One example is in Houston, the Children's Assessment Center, a program like 400 others throughout the United States, where sexually abused children go so that they can be treated not only for their medical injuries but their emotional pain and get themselves prepared for trial.

We have approximately 4,400 agencies in this country that depend on that VOCA victim fund. We are talking about 3.6 million victims a year. VOCA is the only Federal program that supports services to victims of all types of crimes: homicide, drunk driving, elder financial exploitation, identity theft, robbery, and rape.

So what is the problem, Mr. Speaker? Well, the bandit budget bureaucrats are up to their old tricks. They are stealing this money from the victims fund, and they want it to go into the abyss of the Federal treasury.

This may all sound familiar. It is familiar. A year ago those same individ-

uals wanted to do the same thing, and because of different victims groups in the United States, that was stopped. That VOCA fund stayed with victims. It did not go into the abyss of the Federal treasury. But now those bureaucrats are up to these old tricks again, and they want that money to be taken from victims and put into the abyss of the Federal budget.

Mr. Speaker, that money does not belong to the Federal Government. It is not taxpayer money. It is money that belongs to victims.

Victims continue to get victimized in the criminal justice system, and now this is another way of victimizing victims once again.

Mr. Speaker, when I came to the House of Representatives, I, along with Jim Costa from California from the other side of the aisle and Katherine Harris from Florida, started the Victims Rights Caucus to bring the awareness of the plight of victims to this House. Because you see, Mr. Speaker, it is the first duty, the first responsibility, of government to protect the people. Government does a pretty good job of that. We are fighting the war on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq and other places in the world. We are doing a good job.

But we have got a war on terror going on here, and those are the terrorists that live among us, those street terrorists, criminals. And when they are captured and when they are prosecuted and they are put in jail, make them pay. Make them pay financially to support victims, their medical injuries and their needs after they have come to the criminal justice system.

So this money cannot be taken from the victims fund. We will fight this battle again, as Margaret Thatcher said. The victims posse, as I call them, those victims organizations throughout the United States, they are a posse because most of them are volunteers, and they will do what they can to make sure that this money stays left alone, that it stays in the VOCA fund, that it remains moneys for victims and to be used for victims as well.

This is a user fee for criminals. They need to pay. In fact, they need to pay more. The robber barons are taking this money; and, Mr. Speaker, this ought not to be.

CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, Americans are upset about what they view is a compromised, bought-out Congress. They hear of favors passing hands, deals being made, arms being twisted, while votes are held open to the wee hours of the night. They are sick of it, and they should be.

Minor procedural forms are being proposed within this Congress and are being touted as answers. But truly

these proposals are window dressing, and they totally ignore the massive iceberg of campaign money that infects every single officeholder at the Federal level. The old expression goes, "If you really want to know what is going on, follow the money." Thank goodness for Political Moneyline and other Web sites that help reveal what is really going on in Washington.

The reforms being proposed in this Congress do not get at the real problem. Each party is afraid of disarmament and certainly unilateral disarmament to get the money out. Ross Perot had it right a few years ago when he said, Those people in Congress, they are really good people caught in a very bad system.

Congress has nibbled around the edges of reform, and there are some congressional rule changes that may do the same. But to help move toward real reform, I am introducing a package of four bills dealing with the need for real limits on campaign spending as well as slamming shut the revolving door on lobbyists that allows too much foreign-generated influence and money inside this legislative branch.

My proposals are as follows: First, a sense of Congress resolution that recognizes that the Supreme Court erred and was not complete when, in the case of *Buckley v. Valeo*, they stated that free speech equaled money, that no matter how much you spent was okay because money was equated with free speech. Well, if that is true, the converse is true. If you do not have the money, you lack free speech. And more and more Americans are being shut out of the highest levels of lawmaking in this country because they simply do not have the money to compete.

My second bill is the constitutional amendment itself that would give Congress and the States the power to limit the contributions and expenditures made by, in support of, candidates for Federal, State, or local office. That is a tough proposal, but it is one that I think our children and grandchildren will thank us for.

□ 1900

The third measure is the Ethics in Foreign Lobbying Act of 2006, which would prohibit contribution expenditures by foreign-owned corporations and would establish within the Federal Elections Commission a clearinghouse of public information regarding political activities of foreign principals and agents of foreign principals.

It was interesting that some major Russian interests were involved with Mr. Abramoff. As this scandal unravels, we are going to find some very interesting characters sitting at the bottom of that heap.

Finally, the fourth bill is the Foreign Agents Compulsory Ethics and Trade Act of 2006, which would impose a lifetime ban on high-level government officials from representing, aiding, or advising foreign governments and foreign political parties. It imposes a 5-year